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Soviet Cybernetics

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My letter "CIA Cybernetics" (Feb. 12) which linked the science of communication and control with the Soviet economy, was copied by Pravda with the deletion of my statement that the U.S.S.R. had "learned the art, the science of communication and control of the minds and actions of its 226 million people." This lends credence to the contention that the Kremlin recognizes that cybernetics is crucial to the ultimate goals of communism. The CPSU is reluctant to admit that control of both computerized systems as well as information processing by the human brain are prerequisites to the "advance" from socialism to "pure" communism. This is in line with the Soviet practice of concealing indicators of future power and, when all is ready, the cloak is removed to reveal the dagger.

In spite of experience, the U.S. is prone to weakly underestimate this kind of behavior. Somehow, like the once imperial British, we ultimately muddle through but this weakness could lead to our ultimate demise as a world power in spite of our present and overwhelming strengths.

Examples leap to mind: We were the first to fly, flew no U.S. built airplanes in the First World War; we perfected the first submarine yet, in two World Wars, we came nearer to defeat in the underwater environment than elsewhere (now the U.S.S.R. has 400 submarines, 30 nuclear powered); by 1940 the U.S. Navy led the world in carriers and strike aircraft but we were beaten to our knees at Pearl Harbor; in the 1930s, Goddard led the world in rocketry, in 1944-5 the Nazis showered thousands of missiles on England while we had none, and in the 1950s the Soviets led us into space with superior rockets; our 15,000 fishing boats are inferior to hundreds of Soviet fishing vessels with sonar and superior electronics and fishing gear all with an anti-submarine capability (latter words deleted from Pravda

version of my former letter); by 1930, the Soviet mercantile fleet will have 4 times the carrying power of ours; today about 1000 Soviet air transports (70 per cent jet or turboprop) carried 27 million people in 1963 and will carry 200 million in 1980 which favorably compares with U.S. domestic carriers which flew 62 million passengers with 1858 aircraft; and communism continues its self-evident erosion of weak nations in spite of the strong U.S.A. Meanwhile, cybernetics has become the crucial mechanism that can convert an otherwise impracticable Communist system into a viable totalitarian economy that will compete with the U.S. for its share of world trade.

The CIA's recent and wishful assessment of the Soviet economy suggests that it is headed for inevitable decline. Lest we too readily agree, it would be prudent to compare the CIA report with that of the Central Statistical Administration of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers which states that in 1963 "Soviet industrial output on the whole equaled about 65 per cent of the U.S. figure in the past year compared with 47 per cent in 1957 and 33 per cent in 1953." In a decade, Soviet per capita industrial output rose 128 per cent compared with 15 per cent in the U.S.A. True, grain dropped from 56.6 million tons in 1962 to 44.8 in 1963. If these statistics are incorrect by 10 or even 20 per cent, they remain impressive. But a common comment is that Soviet statistics are unreliable! (Like Goldwatered missiles, I suppose).

Aye, and the relative accuracy leaves much to be desired concerning our own assessments of economic, political, scientific, technological, and military threats.

Ride again, Paul Revere, to warn the President lest covert thinkers hold too great a sway and minute-men be outflanked by an alien economy.

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